

Rhode Island Litter Task Force
Meeting Notes, March 24, 2005

Present: Maria Broadbent, City of Newport; John Fornaro, Earth Day RI; Greg Gerritt, ECRI; Tom Getz, DEM; Carolyn Karp, Brown University; Anita San Antonio, RI Food Dealers Assoc; Vinny San Antonio, RIFDA; Barry Schiller, Sierra Club (recorder); Norma Willis, RI Tree Council

- T. Getz reviewed the history of the task force.
- A decision about selecting a Task Force chair was postponed. It was felt RIACC was not (yet) in a position to offer to take charge. In the meantime, T Getz agreed to act as a coordinator, collecting and sending out relevant e-mail. However, it was felt that to be effective, the group will eventually need a designated leader.
- J. Fornaro indicated Earth Day 2005 was an opportunity to call attention to the litter problem and the Task Force. If the task force could get a flyer together for Earth Day, G Gerritt indicated ECRI could help distribute it at Earth Day events.
- B. Schiller felt that funding anti-litter programs required recapturing the revenue stream from the litter tax now going to the General Fund. Others felt this was politically unlikely. C Karp suggested considering some kind of litter patrol program (comparable to Baykeepers) supported by collected fines. Consensus was for now to try to determine the litter tax revenue, how those funds are used, how much is spent on ACI pickups. N Willis, who helped write the anti-litter laws when in the Assembly, was disappointed that anti-litter programs have since been defunded. It was noted however that DEM stormwater management programs might have an anti-litter component due to the need to deal with the floatables in the runoff. Though T Getz noted that municipal governments had not protested an impending loss of anti-litter funds, it was thought Town Councils and League of Cities and Towns involvement may ultimately be useful.
- Plastic bag problems were discussed. It was noted that RIRRC had a school program to help recapture them, and M Broadbent noted Newport schools were involved in this issue. A. San Antonio noted some large retailers, (e.g. Wal-Mart, CVS) may be claiming the law requiring alternatives to plastic bags does not apply to them, possibly requiring further legislative clarification.
- Litter prevention was discussed in relation to education, other DEM pollution prevention programs, and legislated incentives.
- As cigarette litter is significant at the beaches; B Schiller noted that there was a bill now in the Assembly, 05H5621, which would prohibit smoking on public beaches in the state. However, he noted the anti-smoking forces were not giving this much priority, so he suggested the Task Force should eventually consider supporting the bill.
- It was decided to divide litter issues into three categories: prevention, enforcement, and pick-up. Task Force members agreed to brainstorm with their constituencies on ways to deal with each area, including through legislation. Ideas were to be sent to T Getz for collection, organization, and distribution so as to have an informed discussion at the next meeting.
- The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, April 28 at 3pm at DEM.